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You wouldn't think that any statement about a bug that is eating its way through Michigan and is now hungrily visiting Illinois could be poignant.

But the testimony offered by Sandy Clark, forestry and grounds superintendent who has spent 30 years working for Mt. Prospect, was truly touching, given her recent personal knowledge of the devastation caused by the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) insect.

Clark celebrated her 30th year with the village the same week that the arrival of the EAB in Illinois was announced.

"I grew up near the area where Emerald Ash Borer was first found in Michigan in 2002," Clark testified at an Illinois Dept. of Agriculture (IDA) hearing. "I still frequently visit the family and friends who live there. I have watched with a sense of impending doom as EAB has spread throughout Michigan, getting closer and closer to the 4,400 parkway ash trees that I'm responsible for in Mt. Prospect.

"Two of my brothers live in Ann Arbor and Wixom, Michigan, near the epicenter of that state's EAB infestation. Their neighborhood once looked very much like those in Mt. Prospect, filled with many ash trees. Now those ash trees are either gone or dying."

Clark said one month ago she attended a niece's graduation party in Ann Arbor and noticed while she was videotaping the event that small green beetles were flying around the trees and crawling up and down the trunks. "It struck me that, even though hundreds of people passed within a few feet of these trees that day, no one even seemed to notice these unobtrusive pests."

Clark said she also noticed all the campers traveling west to Illinois the next day on I-80/94, and wondered how many of them thought nothing of taking a few pieces of fire wood with them in

their campers and pickup trucks. "I couldn't help but think how simple it is to bring firewood from infested areas in Michigan and Indiana into our state without any consequences."

The EAB was confirmed to be found in the town of Lily Lake in Kane County on June 9. An additional confirmation of infestation in nearby Wilmette was discovered the week of July 12. A survey has begun to determine the extent of the damage, but a preliminary inspection discovered 16 infested trees within a five-block area.

The IDA has declared the EAB to be an official nuisance, which means that the state can require any property owner with the EAB to immediately destroy the tree.

Moreover, the state presented a draft quarantine measure at the July 17 public hearing at which Clark testified on behalf of Mt. Prospect.

That quarantine measure was subsequently approved July 19 for a 51-square mile area in Kane County, in an attempt to prevent the spread of the tree-killing beetle. The boundary lines represent a 3.5-mile radius around the area where the EAB beetle was found.

"An adult beetle can fly a half mile per year, so the boundaries effectively represent seven years of possible migration from the detection site," said Agriculture Dir. Chuck Hartke.

A quarantine means that no quarantined material may be moved from the area. Neither an infested tree, limb, bark from the ash tree, or any chips or sap from the tree can leave the quarantined area. A quarantine may be called for any area in which the EAB is sited.

Mt. Prospect Mayor Irvana Wilks attended the July 17 public hearing with Clark. She related to the village board that, if the bug is found within the village or anywhere else, "The wood can't leave the area. The tree and the larva have to be destroyed where they are found."

Wilmette's recent discovery of the EAB requires the village to quarantine a several block area.

Village President Chris Canning announced that up to 2,800 trees in Wilmette are at risk.

In reaction to the finding, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-10th) requested federal assistance in combating the infestation. "I request that the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture offer Wilmette and surrounding North Shore communities federal expertise and assistance to eliminate the Ash Borer beetle and prevent its spread to neighboring towns."

The Mt. Prospect Block Party will feature a rather large reincarnation of the EAB. Someone, as yet unnamed, will be wearing a sparkly green beetle costume, depicting the devastating EAB, Wilks said. Clark's staff will pass out key chains with small beetles and information regarding how to identify an EAB.

For more information regarding the EAB, visit the village web site at

www.mountprospect.org . To learn more about the nationwide effort to combat EAB, go to www.emeraldashborer.info

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